

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

R C Bigelow Inc

Idaho TechHelp

Tea Company Introduces Visual Tools

Client Profile:

R. C. Bigelow Inc., is a family-owned company which bags, packages and ships flavored tea to grocery retailers, mass merchandisers and the food service industry. Founded in the late 1940's, the company has plants in Connecticut, Idaho, and Kentucky. The Boise, Idaho, plant produces the majority of tea bags for the company with 85 employees.

Situation:

R.C. Bigelow's plant management was seeking to reintroduce operations personnel to lean manufacturing concepts. An earlier attempt to establish pull systems in the company had proved too big a step. After discussions with Idaho TechHelp, a NIST MEP network affiliate, it was agreed that the best approach was to start with 5S Systems, a lean manufacturing program that improves workplace organization and standardization. A 5S program would involve all employees from all lines of work and had the added advantage of being plant specific.

Solution:

TechHelp introduced R.C. Bigelow's manufacturing team to lean manufacturing concepts with a half-day workshop on lean principles tailored to food processor needs. This was followed by a one-day 5S Systems workshop and a two-day 5S kaizen event. The workshop introduced personnel to the 5S (sort, set-in-order, shine, standardize, sustain) workplace organization program. TechHelp then led the plant through the two-day kaizen in the production and packaging areas. R.C. Bigelow has since been implementing 5S practices in all areas of the plant. Employees have formed a 5S team which is helping create a visual workplace through a range of visual tools.

Results:

- * Created a more organized, cleaner, safer area for employees.
- * Increased employee morale, giving employees a buy-in to plant improvements.
- * Improved employee skills.
- * Reduced required floor space by 10 percent to 20 percent.
- * Improved employee mind set for trying new ideas.

Testimonial:

"TechHelp has actual, practical experience in implementing lean programs. While I knew about 5S, I had never gone through practical implementation of the program. TechHelp was able to provide the leadership and the resources to take group and me through the process. I would certainly recommend them."

Dean Hearst, Plant Manager

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